

PSC 101 (SECTION 12): SCOPE AND METHOD

Department of Political Science • George Washington University
Spring 2010 • Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:45 – 2:00 • Duques 259

Professor Brandon Bartels

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 2:00-4:00

Note: I will post course materials and announcements on Blackboard.

Office: Monroe 476

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This class will introduce you to the quantitative study of politics. More generally, you will be exposed to the broader research methods enterprise concerned with the measurement of concepts, descriptive analysis of variables, research design, and research methods employed to make empirical knowledge claims about political phenomena. The class mixes conceptual discussions of these topics with actual hands-on experience in the form of data analysis. We will cover four general topics this quarter: (1) the measurement of political concepts, (2) theory, hypotheses, and research design, (3) descriptive summaries of variables and measures of association between variables, and (4) statistical inference, probability, significance testing, and regression. Note that this class is not solely about *statistics*, per se, but instead on the quantitative research process writ large.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As a result of completing this course, students will:

- Be able to understand how political scientists go about testing hypotheses and doing data analysis.
- Be able to engage in quantitative analysis of various political topics.
- Have a greater understanding of how to use the statistical software package SPSS.
- Be able to evaluate academic studies and media stories that report results from a data analysis.

TEXTBOOK

The following book is required for the course. It is available at the University Bookstore.

Pollock, Philip H. 2008. *The Essentials of Political Analysis* (Third Edition). Washington, DC: CQ Press. ISBN: 978-0-87289-606-2.

SOFTWARE – SPSS

We will be using SPSS, a popular statistical package, in this course. You will be required to use SPSS to complete the assignments. Many of the computers on campus have SPSS on them.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade will be a weighted average of the following tasks:

Attendance (10%). I will take attendance every class period. Attending class is *extremely important* for this class given the cumulative nature of the material. That is, each class session builds on past class sessions. Points will be docked off for each class you miss. However, as I

understand that students may have to miss one class here or there, you will receive one “free” absence for which you will not be penalized.

Homework assignments (40%; 10% each): There will be four homework assignments. The assignments will require the use of SPSS. I will give you clear instructions about how to use SPSS in order to complete the assignments. Due dates for assignments are given below. Assignments must be given to me in class by the day they are due – no exceptions! Let me be clear: *I WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS*. If you anticipate not being in class the day the assignment is due, you should make arrangements to give it to me early.

Homework assignment 1: Due Wed., Feb. 3

Homework assignment 2: Due Wed., Feb. 24

Homework assignment 3: Due Mon., Apr. 5

Homework assignment 4: Due Wed., Apr. 28

- *Note on assignments:* Feel free to work with your classmates on the assignments. Working together on assignments can be very beneficial for learning and understanding the material. However, *you must do your own work*. That is, while you can work together, the final product that you hand in must be your own work.

Midterm exam (25%): Wednesday, March 3

Final exam (25%): Finals week (TBA)

Note: Make-up examinations will generally not be given, except in rare circumstances such as a death in the immediate family or personal illness. In these cases, I will ask for written documentation that justifies why you missed the exam.

GRADING SCHEME

93-100%:	A
90-92.9:	A-
87-89.9:	B+
83-86.9:	B
80-82.9:	B-
77-79.9:	C+
73-76.9:	C
70-72.9:	C-
67-69.9:	D+
60-66.9:	D
<60:	F

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
 - confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
- <http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices>

SECURITY

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1, January 11 & 13: *Introduction and the Measurement of Concepts*

Read: Introduction and Chapter 1

Week 2, January 18 & 20 (**No class on Mon., Jan. 18**): *Concepts, Measurement, and Variables*

Read: Chapter 1

Week 3, January 25 & 27: *Concepts, Measurement, and Variables; Theory and Hypotheses*

Read: Chapter 2

Week 4, February 1 & 3: *Theory and Hypotheses; Describing and Comparing Variables*

Read: Chapters 3

****Homework Assignment 1 Due Wednesday, Feb. 3**

Week 5, February 8 & 10: *Describing and Comparing Variables; SPSS*

Read: Chapter 3

Week 6, February 15 & 17 (**No class on Mon., Feb. 15**): *Research Design*

Read: Chapter 4

Week 7, February 22 & 24: *Research Design; Controlled Comparisons*

Read: Chapters 4 and 5

****Homework Assignment 2 Due Wednesday, Feb. 24**

Week 8, March 1 & 3: *Research Design; Controlled Comparisons*
Read: Chapter 5

**** Midterm exam on Wednesday, March 3**

Week 9, March 8 & 10: *Statistical Inference*
Read: Chapter 6

Week 10 (Week of March 15): **NO CLASS, Spring Break**

Week 11, March 22 & 24: *Statistical Inference; Hypothesis Testing and Statistical Significance*
Read: Chapters 6 and 7

Week 12, March 29 & 31: *Hypothesis Testing and Statistical Significance*
Read: Chapter 7

****Homework Assignment 3 Due Monday, April 5**

Week 13, April 5 & 7: *Correlation and Linear Regression*
Read: Chapter 8

Week 14, April 12 & 14: *Correlation and Linear Regression*
Read: Chapter 8

Week 15, April 19 & 21: *Correlation and Linear Regression; Logistic Regression*
Read: Chapter 9

Week 16, April 26 & 28: *Logistic Regression*
Read: Chapter 9

****Homework Assignment 4 Due Wednesday, April 28**

**** FINAL EXAM (TBA)**